

SB255 (revise the Advancing Ag Education program)Exhibit No. 3
Date 2/6/15
Bill No. SB 255**History:**

- A few years ago Montana was one of a handful of pilot states chosen to test the new National Quality Program Standards (NQPS) Ag Education program
- 2009 Legislature - HB464 provided \$500 funding support for schools that submitted a NQPS plan of improvement, and additional \$1000 if they submitted a detailed budget based on the plan.
- HB464 also provided a one-time payment of \$7500 to any school that started a new Ag Ed program.
- This five-year old program has been very successful and we have grown the number of Montana high school FFA chapters by 20%! (about 20 new schools added FFA Chapters)
- Almost doubled the number of FFA Members in the state, now about 5000 high school students are members.

Problem:

Because of a lack of Ag Ed teachers and Montana's school budget limitations, many local high school have had to be very creative to figure out how to add and fund local CTE programs. We need flexibility to work with this reality.

With the current wording we are limited on how the appropriated funds may be used, especially at the end of the biennium. Sometimes we have money left, and programs that need it, but can't get it to where it can help a school that needs the support.

Sometimes, not every program applies for the full \$1,500, and sometimes there are less than five new programs EACH year apply for the new program funding. Removing the "one-time" wording will allow mini-grants for the funding, something we cannot do with current language.

Several schools have seen so much growth that they are considering adding a SECOND ag teacher, with more cost and more students, so this program will change to pay per FTE (Ag Teacher) instead of per program.

Solution:

SB255 as written simply changes how the \$257,914.00 in the biennium can be spent. The improved flexibility will help a lot.

Removed some references to "one-time payment" so that if there is money available, we can set up a mini-grants program to use it to the best advantage. (Line 21, Line 28, Line 30)

Pg 1, Line 21-21 – Change from \$500 to \$1000 per FTE, the amount that a school can receive for evaluating and submitting a pan of improvement

Pg 1, Line 26-28 – Allow the payment for submitting a detailed budget, for each FTE (Ag Teacher) in the school

Pg 1. Line 30 through Line 2 on Pg 2, - Change to allow a school to get the one-time \$7,500 payment if they add Ag Education or hire a second Ag Teacher

Pg 2, line 3 – allow an increased amount of \$8,750 per year so that program administrators can make the required on-site visit to the participating schools